

AHA AND EPA ENTER NEW PHASE OF HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON (June 26, 2001) -- The American Hospital Association (AHA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) last week reaffirmed their commitment to, and kicked off the next phase of their Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) program. The program has two primary goals: to eliminate the use of mercury in health care settings and to reduce overall waste that comes from caring for patients.

The next phase will include:

Spreading the word to hospitals and health care leaders about the goals of the partnership

Disseminating tools and resources to help accomplish these goals

Creating an awards program that will recognize successful local efforts to eliminate mercury and reduce hospital waste

Promoting a pledge program for hospitals committed to the goals of the partnership

Sponsoring education efforts through AHA professional societies

“As a promoter of health, hospitals take our stewardship of the environment very seriously,” said Mac Robinson, AHA’s vice president. “We’re proud of the work we’ve accomplished so far and we’re committed to helping our members reach these goals.”

“Our partnership with the AHA has produced the tools and programs hospitals need to help them reach the important pollution prevention goals,” said Dr. William H. Sanders, director of the EPA Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics. “Our goal now is to get hospitals to participate in the program and use the tools we have developed. We look forward to continuing our partnership with AHA and others to achieve that goal.”

While the initial phase of the program focused on developing tools and resources to help hospitals accomplish the program’s goals, the next stage will focus on educating hospitals about the resources available to help them change waste management practices and on educating hospital personnel on ways to accomplish the reduction goals.

In 1998, AHA and EPA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to jointly find ways to encourage hospitals to voluntarily eliminate mercury and reduce overall waste. That MOU resulted in the creation of the tools and resources that comprised phase one of the H2E program. Moreover, it institutionalized the H2E program that has had an immediate and positive impact on the nation’s hospitals.

Several practical tools and resources are already easily available to hospitals, state government and healthcare associations on the H2E website: www.h2e-online.org. Tools include sample plans for mercury elimination and environmentally preferable purchasing, as well as suggestions for improving tracking of environmental costs in hospitals.

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the health improvement of their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which includes 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other

providers of care and 37,000 individual members. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the AHA Web site at www.aha.org.